



**Department for  
Communities and  
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31/10/2013

Dear Matt,

Thank you for your letters of 28 October, in response to my two recent letters to you regarding fitness and capability and the pensions' dispute.

Councillor Heaster has written to me on behalf of the employers saying that he wishes to agree fitness and capability principles with you. I believe that the draft principles you have already seen, if followed, will ensure that no firefighter is put in a position where they have no job or no pension. This addresses the issue you have made central to the current dispute.

You place great store by the national arrangements you have in place with the employers to oversee such matters between you. I have noted and am disappointed that these are not proving successful. Therefore, tomorrow I will commence consultation on a similar set of principles, before issuing them as departmental guidance. In this I will indicate that the implementation of these principles would be subject to an independent review after three years. I will incorporate reference to these principles in the National Framework.

As you know, the offer made on the 19 June regarding enhanced actuarial reductions to firefighters choosing to retire between the ages of 55 and 57, was conditional upon acceptance. As I made crystal clear to you when we met, further strike action would be taken as an outright rejection of that offer and it will be off the table if strike action take place at the end of the week.

I believed from our earlier discussions that we had found a way to address your main concerns. I urge you to discuss the proposals that have been put forward and bring an end to this dispute and unnecessary strike action.

I am copying this letter to Councillor Heaster.

**BRANDON LEWIS MP**